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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN SELECTED PLAYS OF GIRISH KARNAD

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1.1. INTRODUCTION

The present study attempts to analyse and criticize the selected plays of Girish Karnad. This study covers his five plays regarding the contemporary issues depicted by different characters in these five plays of Girish Karnad.

Contemporary issues here is the basic humanitarian etiquettes required to lead humans toward more satisfactory and fulfilled life are being missed out consciously or unconsciously and as a result humans, today, are suffering besides having all the amenities rendering for their service. To be more specific, these issues include consumerism attitude to which we can also claim as materialistic attitude which has been the centre of attention these days. Having all the comfort around us we desire and strive for few more benefits without content for whatever we have. This is one of the aspects of the contemporary issues that will be discussed in this study. Other aspects of contemporary issues are human's fundamentalist attitude that is creating disharmony among society, the value we as humans have to pay to lead the life in so called metropolitan city, the marriage institution and its undiscussed problems, and the extent to which humans can go to in order to achieve the fame.

Literature is one of the oldest forms of human civilization through which one can witness the evolution of human beings. Humans always depicted their thoughts through one or the other forms of literature such as Poems, Novels, Short Stories, Plays etc. These are the excellent tools available to the creative folks so that they can show the range of thoughts they possess to the society. This range of thoughts deals with their capability of manipulating words and extract the expected and unexpected meaning out of their art forms. It's not only the matter of having capacity to frame their thoughts in beautiful and meaningful words but to possess enough courage to depict the reality of the society (Good or Bad) and break all the stereotypes by showing mirror to the people.

It is said that literature is the mirror of Society. One can also claim that Society is a mirror of Literature. They both are interdependent on each other. You cannot separate these two and study them individually. Even if you do, it's highly possible that you will not reach to the real message an author or poet wants to deliver through his/her creation.

Plays are one such art forms which played a crucial role in paving out a way for human emotions and letting them pour out all their genius. Plays are not new to the union of India as we trace back to Mricchakatika (The Little Clay Cart) One of the earliest known Sanskrit plays, this play was composed by Śudraka in the 2nd century BC. But English plays established their brand after British invasion in 1600. Surely, we managed to get into the soul of their language soon and commenced writing the plays in foreign language also.

English Drama in India was started by Krishna Mohan Banerji with his work The Persecuted (1837). It was a social play dealing with the conflicts between East and West. The real dawn of the English Drama in India was with 'Is This Called Civilization' by Michael Madhu Sudan Dutt in 1871.

Indian English Drama dates to the 18th century when the British Rule became stable in India. British brought with them, the theatre. But during the initial decades of their rule, they could not present English Drama due to the unawareness of Indians regarding the English Language. Hence, a lot of English plays, like those of Shakespeare were translated into Indian Languages and then presented before the Indians. Gradually, Western education made its way to India. As a result, Indian English Drama came into existence. Indian English Drama could not proceed for two decades after M.M.S. Dutt due to some plausible reasons. It was getting difficult to sound the English play natural and genuine like in any other regional language. This difficulty was overcome by eminent playwrights like R.N. Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Indian English Drama made quite a progress after R.N. Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Since then, we have a long list of Indian English play writes and Girish karnad's name shines brighter on the horizon. He has a lot and literally a lot under his cap.

1.2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Girish Karnad (19 May 1938 – 10 June 2019) an Indian actor, film director, Kannada writer, playwright and, who predominantly worked in South Indian cinema and Hindi film industry. He showed people a new perspective of the Kannada language by writing some of his unparallel plays and proving his worth.

Karnad's initial schooling was in Marathi. Later, after his father was transferred to Sirsi in the Kannada-speaking regions of Bombay Presidency, Karnad was exposed to travelling theatre groups, which were experiencing a period of efflorescence during the iconic Balgandharva era. As a youngster, he was an ardent admirer of Yakshagana and the theater in his village. His family moved to Dharwad in Karnataka when he was fourteen, where he grew up with his two sisters and a niece.

He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics and statistics from Karnatak Arts College, Dharwad Karnataka University, in 1958. After graduation, he went to England and studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Magdalen in Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar (1960–63), earning his Master of Arts degree in philosophy, political science and economics. Karnad was elected the President of the Oxford Union in 1962–63.

Karnad is known as a playwright. His plays, written in Kannada, have been translated into English mostly translated by himself and some Indian languages. Kannada is his language of choice. Yayati was published in 1961, when he was 23 years old. It is based on the story of King Yayati, one of the ancestors of the Pandavas, who was cursed into premature old age by his preceptor, Shukracharya, who was incensed at Yayati's infidelity. Yayati, in turn, asks his sons to sacrifice their youth for him, and one of them agrees. It ridicules the ironies of life through characters in Mahabharata.

Similarly, we have a list of Karnad’s plays which were translated in English such as

2. Bali: The Sacrifice, Oxford University Press

Karnad’s concern is with the life of the modern man that is very complex and lacks in wholeness. The employment of the old tales is to focus on the absurdity of modern life with all its elemental passions and conflicts. In this way the folk-tales become vehicles for the modern living under the impact of western ideologies.

3. Boiled Beans on Toast, Oxford University Press, 2014

'Boiled Beans on Toast' is a deceptively simple play, that in a non-linear narrative, lays bare the aspirations and hopes of a large mass of Indians today, but also subtly explores several modern themes such as urban migration, environmental concerns, consumerism etc, all laced with a great deal of warmth and humour.

4. Wedding Album, Oxford University Press, 2006

The main theme of the game is its counselling of sexual, conjugal, caste, class and aging behaviours, egotistical and sacrificial attitudes and behaviours, chastity and trade, and obedience and authority, all of which are integral to the modern Hindu marriage.

5. Broken Images

Parental neglect, intellectual inferiority, and sibling rivalry are themes visible through Manjula's hesitant answers to herself. The three-way divide between our carefully crafted public selves, who we think we are, and who we actually are is starkly laid bare.

1.3. OBJECTIVES

From the literature review the following objectives are noticed

1. To critically analyse the consumerism attitude predominantly shown by contemporary generation by the way they live their extravagant lives.
2. To analyse the fundamentalist attitude that is overpowering the basic sense of living of human beings.
3. To understand the quest of being famous of humans and the limit they set for themselves to achieve it.
4. To critically analyse the hollowness of Indian Marriage institution where ‘packaging seems more important than the product itself.
5. To critically analyse the value, one pays for sustaining the so-called standard of living.

1.4. HYPOTHESIS

2. The king Yayati depicts the consumerism attitude through his constant urge of having material wellbeing around him.
3. The king Arjun in Bali shows the fundamentalist attitude through his violence and non-violence practices.
4. Manjula shows no limit to quench her thirst of being famous and became evil in human disguise.
5. Customs, and not the human emotions has central place in the heart of Indian marriage institution.
6. Humans are always on the verge of emotional, psychological break down and pay a huge value to live in Metropolitan cities.

1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed study intends to evaluate the selected primary texts i.e., plays written by Girish Karnad and analyse the characters and their traits. A detailed study of the original work is involved along with some other published works which depicts the character traits of the characters involved in the said plays.

Hence, the methodology would be Descriptive, Analytical and Critical in nature. The suitable and all possible primary and secondary sources would be evaluated to conduct the research successfully. Books, journals and interviews etc. will be made use of as a source. The methodology is to be used as per the MLA style book. Besides this, almost all guidelines are to be followed as per the norms and suggestions relating to this research work.

1.6. JUSTIFICATION OF RESEARCH

The research intends to evaluate the character traits of different major and minor characters by having all possible materials avail to its maximum benefit from multiple platforms irrespective of their nature as in online, offline, published papers in national and international journals.

The research will also take help of human source available for the betterment of pupil in the guise of respected supervisor of the research.

1.7. PROPOSED CHAPTER SCHEME

The proposed study is divided into seven chapters.

I. INTRODUCTION

The chapter will introduce the very nature of literature and its impact and role in human lives. It tells the origin of Indian drama along with the information of Indian English plays started to appear in India after being invaded by the colonisers. India has been witnessing some excellent playwrights in all regional languages since very long and successfully maintained its continuity till recent times.

Girish karnad is one such bright spot on the horizon who shined like no other playwrights. His impeccable writing skill along with the convincing power to mould the audience the way he wanted through his story telling and character presentation technique makes him ‘odd man out’ amid all other talented artists.

II. CONSUMERISM

Girish Karnad’s play “Yayati” throws light on the lifestyle of typical modern man which is very complex and intricate, bound by unlimited desires which can never be fulfilled. ‘Yayati’ can also be interpreted as a play dealing with the theme of responsibility. A man should be

ready to accept the responsibility of the outcome of his own actions. But Yayati, the king, himself is not ready to shoulder his responsibility when things go against his will.

III. BEING FUNDAMENTALISTS

It was first brought out into Kannada in 1980 by the name of Hittina Hunja. It has been taken from an ancient Kannada epic, Yashodhara Charite. Though the play is based on an ancient epic, yet it deals with the issues that are relevant today as they were many centuries ago. The plot of the play consists of four characters-The King, The Queen, The Queen Mother (the King's Mother), The Mahout. The confrontation between the two traditional ideologies, violence and non-violence, associated with two religions namely Hinduism and Jainism are presented through the play. The Queen-Mother and the Queen are the representative perspectives of the ideologies. To present his idea, the dramatist has selected a royal family instead of a normal one because it is a centre which exerts influence on common people who just imitate the king and his culture and enlarged the scope of the play.

IV. THE VALUE TO LIVE IN METROPOLITAN

This is a masterfully structured play that makes the city of Bangalore and its explosive growth in the last two decades its subject. It avoids the prevalent clichés of its image as an IT city or a city of numerous call centres. Instead, it presents the stories of a cross section of those who live in Bangalore, and whose expectations, survival techniques and disappointments are all coloured by it.

V. PACKAGING AND THE PRODUCT

Girish Karnad's Wedding Album is a modern myth, which incorporates both actual and tech-simulated universes. It is hoped that the Indian wedding would unite the community in unity and shared interest. Yet the collision of fears and resentments that have been hidden inside the family's bosom is well established. The main theme of the game is its counselling of sexual, conjugal, caste, class and aging behaviours, egotistical and sacrificial attitudes and behaviours, chastity and trade, and obedience and authority, all of which are integral to the modern Hindu

marriage. Karnad represents a fusion of cultures, and his systematic studies are much more comprehensive than those of some of his peers and undoubtedly are far more effective.

VI. QUEST FOR BEING FAMOUS

Karnad masterfully shows us that we are not all that we think we are skeletons hidden in our closet rattle unnervingly at the unlikeliest of times. He leaves some situations open to interpretation. Some might even wonder if the Image on screen Manjula's projection of herself is, or her sister's ghost. Perhaps Manjula has not written the novel herself but quite literally stolen Malini's memoirs. There is a lot of scope for fanciful speculation; maybe Pramod being a stay-at-home software developer helped Malini write the novel. Karnad warns that the castle of lies we tell ourselves might collapse on itself, riddled with inconsistencies.

VII. CONCLUSION

This chapter intends to sum up the arguments of earlier chapters and will ultimately come to a certain conclusion based on said plays.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Following texts of the author will be referred for proposed study

1. Yayati
2. Bali: The Sacrifice
3. Boiled Beans on Toast
4. Wedding Album
5. Broken Image

SECONDARY SOURCES

The secondary data will be collected from all possible websites, published papers in national and international journals, books, magazines, news articles. If necessary, data will be collected by attending the seminars and/or conferences as per the convenience of the researcher and feasibility in attending those conferences.

Shridhar Bhat*, in Journal of Advances and Scholarly Research in Allied Education | Multidisciplinary Academic Research

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